

**Public Involvement Policy for Proposals to Acquire
Property, Initiate Funded Capital Projects, or
Make Changes to a Park or Facility**

Amended October 1, 2002
Adopted July 1, 1999



Mission Statement

Seattle Parks and Recreation will work with all citizens to be good stewards of our environment, and to provide safe and welcoming opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for soliciting and considering public input in the review of proposals to acquire property, initiate funded capital projects, or undertake changes to a park property that will, in the judgment of the Superintendent, substantially modify the property's use or appearance.

People Affected

- Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- Board of Park Commissioners
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Councils
- Associated Recreation Council
- Community Organizations
- User Organizations
- Neighborhood District Councils
- Department of Neighborhoods
- Park Neighbors

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Department of Parks and Recreation, in carrying out its mission,

- To invite and encourage direct public involvement in the review of its funded capital projects and any proposal that would, in the judgment of the Superintendent, substantially modify the property's use or appearance.
- To provide early and thorough notification of proposals and projects, through a variety of means, to users, user groups, neighborhoods, neighborhood groups and other interested people
- To complete the process by notifying involved and interested people and groups of final decisions and the reasons for them
- To consider exempt from this policy any proposal or project undertaken for legal or safety reasons, any proposal for which the public process is spelled out elsewhere by ordinance or by policy, or events protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Responsible DPR Parties

Superintendent of Parks and Recreation
Division Directors
Real Estate Manager
Planners
Project Managers
Parks and Recreation Managers
Engineering and Design Professional Staff
Crew Chiefs
Board of Park Commissioners and Staff
Program Managers
Landscape Architects
Program Managers

Facility Coordinators
Public Information Office
Public Relations Specialists
Special Events Coordinator
Contracts and Business Resources Manager
Core Team Members
Volunteer Coordinators
CIP Budget Manager
Environmental Programs Staff
Gardeners
Golf Manager

References

- Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 18.12 (Park Code)
- Seattle Parks and Recreation 2000 Plan
- Policies and Procedures
- Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 25.05 (State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Rules)
- Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 3 (Administrative Code)

Responsibilities

DPR ProView Team : comprised of managers, technical staff (landscape architects), crew chiefs and facility coordinators: reviews the public involvement element of each program plan, goes over the response to Attachment A, identifies the responsible people, tools, events and timelines that will be included in the public involvement plan, and recommends a public involvement plan to the DPR Project Steering Committee.

DPR Project Steering Committee, comprised of division directors and attended by the CIP Budget Manager and various project managers: reviews and recommends changes in capital projects; gives final approval of public involvement plans recommended by the ProView Team; makes recommendations to the Superintendent on how to proceed following the public process.

DPR Planner or Project Manager (can be a Project Manager, Planner, Landscape Architect, Engineering and Design professional, or any staff person acting as the de facto manager of a project): works with the Operations Division representative, a public relations specialist, and the public information office as necessary, to carry out the approved public involvement plan for planning processes or funded capital projects.

Operations Division Representative: Department staff who can be recreation or park resource managers, crew chiefs or facility coordinators, or a combination of these: works with the project manager, the public information office and a public relations specialist to help carry out the public involvement plans.

DPR Public Relations Specialists: work with the project manager, the Operations Division representative, and the public information office to carry out the public involvement plans, and bear primary responsibility for the plans.

Board of Park Commissioners and Staff: review projects that are, in the Superintendent's judgment, of sufficient scope and community impact or interest to warrant the input and recommendations of the Board of Park Commissioners.

Procedures

For capital projects the opportunity for direct citizen involvement, participation and public input comes at two points in the life of a proposal or project. The first opportunity is associated with the funding phase of a project. The second phase, addressed in this document, begins life after approval of funding.

Once funding for a capital project is approved, the next step is the development of a program plan (which includes scope, design and impacts), a document drafted by a planner/project manager and reviewed by the Program Manager that lays out the steps required to complete the project. The ProView Team then reviews each program plan at one of its regular meetings. Attending the ProView meeting, depending on the skills and expertise the project calls for, are the Department staff most knowledgeable about the facility or park and about its users, neighbors, nearby community organizations and active issues. Also attending ProView are the project manager and skilled trade, volunteer coordinator, or other staff bearing some responsibility for the project.

At the ProView meeting, where the program plan is reviewed, the Department develops the proposed public process for the project. To arrive at an appropriate public process, staff will answer a series of questions designed to identify characteristics that are intended to help indicate the breadth and range of public interest. The list of questions is shown in Attachment A. The recommendations of the ProView Team are then referred to the Project Steering Committee for review and approval.

1. **Sign.** If no public meetings are planned, the project manager will, within four weeks of Project Steering approval of the public involvement plan, install a 4' x 4' sign at the site, except in cases where installation would be hazardous or the sign invisible. If one or more public meetings are planned, the 4' x 4' sign will be installed three weeks before the public meeting. DPR staff will also post the notice on the web site, and include the contact person for any adopt-a-park agreement, the chair of the nearest Advisory Council, and the community council for the area as shown on the Department of Neighborhoods map. The sign will include the following information:
 - A description of the proposal, who and what prompted it, budget information (amount and source), how the project would change the park, whether it responds to a neighborhood plan element, and why DPR believes it meets citizens' and community needs
 - An explanation of the steps necessary to carry out the proposal, and a timeline

- The name, telephone number and e-mail address of the knowledgeable contact person (usually the project manager)
- Appropriate maps or graphics
- An invitation to comment or ask questions with a specific due date at least two weeks from the date the sign is installed
- Public meeting information, if a public meeting has been scheduled

Flyers. On or adjacent to the sign will be a holder containing flyers bearing the same information as the sign, if appropriate.

Web Site. At the time the sign is erected, the same information will be posted on the web site (on the page for a specific park, under the "Projects and Planning" section, and on the Events and Meetings Calendar).

Other Distribution The flyer will be distributed to the nearest branch library, community center, district council, community council and other neighborhood groups that ask to be notified, neighborhood service center, fire station, and appropriate Department of Neighborhoods Sector Manager.

News release. A news release will go to the local community newspaper, the Seattle Times and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

2. The project manager and the Operations Division representative, or other responsible staff, will assess the public input prompted by the site sign and received by the due date. They will then review the initial public process plan, recommended by the ProView Team and approved by the Project Steering Committee, and make a judgment on whether to schedule a public meeting if one is not already scheduled.
3. If a public meeting and/or hearing is to be held, the project manager, the Operations Division representative, and the public relations specialist will invite the following, as relevant:
 - Residents within a 300' radius of the park boundaries
 - Local community organizations
 - Community center and activity-based advisory councils
 - Neighborhood planning groups
 - Local community newspapers
 - Groups that would have a natural interest in the site or project relating to their missions, such as environmental groups
 - User groups
 - "Friends of " groups
 - Adopt-A-Park groups
 - Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, if appropriate
 - Appropriate neighborhood district council
 - Other City departments as appropriate
 - Relevant DPR staff
 - The local Block Watch Captain
 - The appropriate Sector Manager in the Department of Neighborhoods
4. The project manager, the Operations Division representative, and the public relations specialist will design an invitation flyer and distribute it to all invitees. The flyer will contain

the same information as the site sign and any other important information; and will be mailed at least three weeks before the public meeting date. The meeting site will be as close as practical to the project site and will be ADA-accessible.

5. At the public meeting, the project manager and the Operations Division representative, or other responsible staff, will use a format that is hospitable to questions and expressions of concern from the public, will listen carefully, and will answer questions in a straightforward and nonjudgmental manner. All project information will be available for review. The meeting could include a site walk-through, if not then than at a time that is acceptable to all.
6. If the project comprises both a planning phase and a design phase, or if the manager and the Operations Division representative or other responsible staff agree that it is appropriate, a second meeting will be scheduled.
7. If, in the judgment of the Superintendent, the project is of sufficient scope and community impact or interest to warrant the input and recommendations of the Board of Park Commissioners, the project manager will work with the Board staff to schedule the issue for Board consideration. The project manager will ensure that the information about the Board of Park Commissioners meeting at which the issue will be considered:
 - Is placed in the project sign flyer holder at least three weeks before the meeting;
 - Is placed on the Department's web site at least three weeks before the meeting; and
 - Is mailed at least three weeks before the meeting to all who attended an earlier meeting on the project, or who have indicated they would like to be contacted about further developments.
8. The project manager will make a project decision-making process chart and timeline available at all public meetings to explain the opportunities for public input and who will ultimately make the decision on how to proceed.
9. Within two weeks after the public meeting, or after the last public meeting if more than one is held, the project manager, the Operations Division representative, and/or the public relations specialist will draft and send out to the accumulated mailing and e-mail lists a letter that:
 - Recounts the steps and participants in the public process
 - Summarizes the community concerns that were expressed, the basis for the decision, and whether it was consistent with existing policies and plans
 - Notifies all interested people and groups of the decision on the proposal
 - Describes amendments or changes that resulted from the public process.
 - Includes a summary of the Board of Park Commissioners discussion and recommendation, if applicable.

A copy of the letter will be posted on the site sign and on the web site on the appropriate page.

ATTACHMENT A

Internal DPR questions to ask in determining the scope of a public process.

A. If the answer to any of the following is YES, the Public Involvement Policy does not apply.

- Is the public process for the proposed project guided by a law or separate City policy? If yes, refer to that law or policy. (For example, City's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) rules, SMC Chapter 25.05; DPR Policy and Procedure 3.9.1.1, Concession Contracts: Public participation in request for proposal; Non-Park Use Policies and Procedures.)
- Is the proposal the result of a current emergency situation? If so, no public process is necessary.

B. If the answer to any of the following is YES, there will be at least one public meeting.

- Does the proposal affect an Olmsted park?
- Would the completed proposal substantially change what the park looks like?
- Would the completed proposal substantially change what activities can occur in the park?
- Would the proposal involve construction or other activity that would substantially disrupt park activities, or require the closure of the entire park? (For example, would it displace a large scheduled event, close a beach for a summer weekend, etc.?)
- Was the proposal initiated by members of the community (i.e., is it a Neighborhood Matching Fund project or a neighborhood plan-identified project?)
- Does the proposal add space to the park system?
- Would the completed proposal result in a demonstrable increase in an existing activity or use?
- Would the completed proposal result in demonstrable impacts on surrounding neighbors?
- Is the proposed project subject to the provisions of the Joint Use Agreement with the Seattle School District?
- Will the project affect persons with disability or other special populations?

C. If the answer to any of the following is NO, refer the issue to the Board of Park Commissioners for review.

- Is the proposal consistent with the current year Capital Improvement Plan?
- Is the proposal consistent with the park's Master Plan, if applicable?
- Is the proposal consistent with the Department's Parks and Recreation 2000 Plan?
- Is the proposal consistent with the neighborhood plan, if applicable?
- Is the proposal consistent with the Use Management Guidelines for Park and Recreation Facilities (Policy and Procedure 7.13.1), or with specific use management guidelines for Green Lake, Freeway, Seward/Lake Washington Boulevard, Gasworks, Occidental, Volunteer, Sand Point Magnuson, Lincoln, Waterfront, Market (Steinbrueck), Stan Sayres/Mt. Baker Rowing Parks?
- Does the Department have the resources to sustain the level of activity in the park?

D. Other factors to consider in deciding the scope of a public process:

- What are the "unintended consequences"?
- Does the proposal respond to a documented need?
 - Safety
 - Recreational
 - Routine maintenance/repair/replacement based on a condition assessment
 - Other
- Have scheduled activities (picnics, day camps, ball games, etc.) been cancelled?

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